



**Federal Aviation
Administration**

**Russ Chew 1-800-FAA-NEWS Phone Message
March 31st, 2006**

Hello, this is Russ Chew with this week's update for March 31st.

This week we extended the open period for voluntary early retirement until April 28th so our employees will have more time to consider whether they want to opt for it. We also extended the offer to one group of employees that was formerly excluded from it; all bargaining unit engineers and architects can now opt for voluntary early retirement, if they meet all other eligibility requirements.

Also this week, about 300 administrative and staff support people were notified that their positions would be relocated to one of the new ATO service centers in Atlanta, Fort Worth, or Seattle. This is part of the continuing service area restructuring plan that we announced last December; and although occupational relocations have become much more commonplace in America, I know it can be very tough on employees and their families. Many of you are rooted in your communities, with family and friends nearby, and with your children settled into neighborhood schools.

But tough as it is, this restructuring is absolutely necessary. The fact is, we no longer have the resources to keep duplicate staff in all nine regions. For many years now, our operating costs have grown to such an extent that we haven't been able to backfill behind the people who retire, leave, or take other jobs. Attrition in place is not the answer. As more and more positions go unfilled, we won't even be able to provide the service to each other, let alone our customers. There will be just too few people to fill the gaps.

I want you to know that we are doing everything we can to make this transition work. For those who accept the reassignments, we'll pay for the move, to the full extent allowed. We've offered early retirement to eligible employees; and not just to those in positions being relocated, but also to those in the nearby areas to create possible openings for those who don't want to move. For our people who can't retire and choose not to move, we're working hard to identify other opportunities in the local areas. So tough as it is, I'm asking everyone for your support as we take this difficult, but important step, in laying our foundation for the future.

On another note, I've talked before about leading the world in air traffic control, and about our goals of safety, security, and system efficiency. But there is something else that is just as critical. For us to achieve results, we must all work towards creating a supportive environment that encourages everyone to be part of it.

Because of the stresses typically related to contract negotiations, it's easy to focus on the relationship between management-labor. But as important as that is, there's an equally important part of the workplace that involves all of us, regardless of whether we're a manager, supervisor, union, or non-union employee. I'm talking about how we show our respect for one another, regardless of gender, race, religion, or any other aspect that might make us different from each another.

For the ATO to succeed in the long run, we must encourage new and different approaches to how we deliver air traffic services – and that means creating a workplace that doesn't pre-judge the value people bring to the organization because of these differences. Based on what I've seen at both headquarters and our field facilities, this is an area where we must all work to improve.

Over the past year, we've expanded our focus on the work environment by creating a Model Workplace Council for each ATO service unit – which supports our Equal Employment Opportunity program -- and is managed by our office of Model Workplace and Diversity. This year, our plan includes expanding this important effort from headquarters to our field facilities.

Finally, I'd like to congratulate Richard E. Lyon, Manager of the Fire Research Program at our Tech Center in Atlantic City. Richard recently received a special achievement award for his work in assessing the fire properties of materials, marking the first time that FAA technology developed in a federal laboratory has transferred to the commercial market.

That's all for this week. Thanks for listening.